

NEWS

Something Good from a Bad Year

The year 1998 saw a string of disasters that hit from one end of the continent to the other. From an unpredictable spring to a severe December freeze in California, a crippling drought in South Central states, and Hurricane Georges in Puerto Rico, it seemed few areas escaped Mother Nature's outbursts. In addition to the weather, an economic recession added to the stress levels of both farmers and those trying to help them. Thousands of disaster applications hit FSA offices with maximum impact, and the cry went out for help. The following stories provide just a glimpse of the hundreds of FSA volunteers who heard the call and were ready to meet the challenges.

Ken Windsor, Program Technician, Okaloosa County, Fla., is used to hot weather, so in April when Puerto Rico

needed help coping with the aftermath of Hurricane Georges, he was ready to head south into more heat. The staff in Corozal was faced with what looked like an overwhelming task — dealing with several different disaster programs encompassing many small farms, multiple crops, and diverse farming conditions.

For 10 days, Windsor data-loaded Crop Loss Disaster Assistance Program (CLDAP) applications into the computer, with help from Agricultural Credit Officer Wanda Perez, who reviewed the applications. Windsor didn't speak Spanish, but with his co-workers' help, he got the job done. He says, "It was an interesting time for a country boy who couldn't speak the language and didn't have a clue about plantains, cassava, dasheens, or tanniers. The Corozal staff was so

helpful and generous. They immediately accepted me as one of their own and made it a great experience."

From the West comes a different perspective. Grapes, figs, cotton, bamboo shoots, tomatoes, catfish, cut flowers, and lettuce were just some of the wide range of crops impacted by devastating weather conditions in California. The FSA crew there struggled to keep up with piles of disaster applications.

Workers had to deal with varying types of claims, tremendous crop diversity and, to add to the mix, a wide range of cultures. "Ethnic diversity abounds in this state and the mosaic of agriculture is no exception," says Chris Keeler, Merced County's District Director. "Approximately 1 out of 4 CLDAP applicants was a member of a minority group. Office managers conducted effective outreach and met multi-language needs. Small roadside gardens, as well as huge farming operations were affected — nothing about CLDAP seemed simple."

As Keeler looked around the Fresno office at 11 p.m. one May evening, he saw volunteers from five different county offices who were still hard at work. Many had served for 2 weeks straight (weekends too) and had shifted from county to county as needed. When it became apparent that the Tulare office needed help, the Fresno group went down in mass to lend a hand. That group saw the sunrise before their work was through.

From Modoc County, another Chris (this one is Lauppe, CED) drove almost 500 miles to Fresno to do



Ken Windsor (left) on a site visit with farmer Luis Gonzalez in Corozal, Puerto Rico.

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ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

Celebrating Our Workforce at USDA Awards Ceremony

On June 9, USDA held its 53rd Annual Honor Awards Ceremony. Secretary Glickman and the entire Department honored some very special USDA employees, including many from FSA. The Secretary also expressed his appreciation for the work of the thousands of outstanding USDA employees across the Nation. "USDA has a proud heritage of serving the American people since 1862, touching the lives of every citizen every day," he said. "The work accomplishments of the employees honored today continues that heritage." I, along with the Secretary, celebrate the stellar achievements of this year's honorees.

FSA's award recipients are:

Secretary's Special Honor Award (new category)

- **Carolyn Cooksie**, Washington, D.C., for prevailing over extraordinary farm loan program challenges presented by the current farm crisis.

Silver Plow Honor Award — Public Service

- **Yevonne S. Prewitt**, West Point, Miss., for distinguished public service through professional

career achievements and personal community volunteer activities.

Individual Achievement — Personal and Professional Excellence

- **Diane Sharp**, Washington, D.C., for outstanding development and delivery of numerous ongoing and emergency programs during a period of extremely heavy workload.

Individual Achievement — Support Personnel

- **Frances A. Wlazlak**, Lebanon, Pa., for dedication to FSA, fellow staff members, and the farmers of Lebanon County.

Group Achievement — Personal and Professional Excellence

- **Tobacco Fraud Task Force**, Raleigh, N.C., for exceptional efforts in curtailing the illegal marketing of flue-cured tobacco.
- **Total Quality Systems Audit Program Team**, Washington, D.C.; **Dean D. Jenson**, **Group Leader**; **Rebecca A. Lee**; **Catherine E. Johnson**; **James G. Johnson**. For development of the Total Quality Systems Audit Program ensuring that domestic and export food assistance recipients receive the safest and highest quality food products available.

Government Technology Leadership Award, presented by the Government Technology Leadership Institute

- **David Liem**, Kansas City, Kan., for electronic bid entry system.

1998 Labor-Management Partnership Award, sponsored by the Department of Agriculture Partnership Council

- **The Union Coordination Council**, a partnership made up of FSA, other USDA agencies, and unions. For outstanding achievement in developing a successful labor-management partnership

between management of 7 agencies and 14 state field unions.

Length of Service Award — 40 or more years

- **Robert J. Cooney**, Kansas City, Mo.
- **Willie F. Cooper**, Alexandria, Va.
- **Elnora C. Dooms**, Washington, D.C.
- **Bobby L. Foil**, Raleigh, N.C.
- **Lavar H. Hendricks**, Yakima, Wash.
- **Frederick L. Kaplan**, Alexandria, Va.
- **Joan R. Kimes**, Washington, D.C.
- **Leonard Lathan**, Gastonia, N.C.

Length of Service Award — 50 or more years

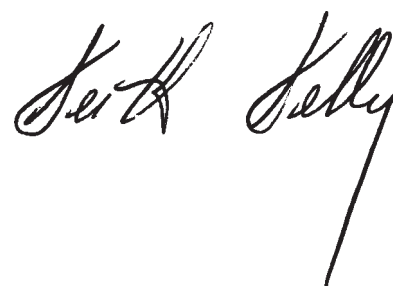
- **Clare A. Hall**, Gonzales, Texas

Length of Service Award — 60 or more years

- **Harold V. Mangum**, Raleigh, N.C.

I wish to express my heartfelt thank you to all the FSA award recipients, those employees who particularly distinguished themselves over the past year. The awards ceremony also represents an opportunity for me to again extend my gratitude to the entire FSA workforce for meeting the demands placed on you every day, especially during this stressful time of low commodity prices and a troubled farm economy.

In FSA we have so many unrecognized heroes, especially our field employees who work with farmers every day. You should all be proud of what you do, as I am proud of you. Day in and day out, your achievements touch the lives of America's farmers and ranchers and improve American agriculture.



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Lights! Camera! Action! — A Training Video Takes Off

by Sharon Thoman, Farm Programs Appeals Division, Kansas State FSA Office

Recently, the Kansas State FSA Office came up with a practical, cost-effective way to train all of our employees on program dispute resolution. We produced our own training videotape, and this spring distributed copies to our offices around the state.

The need for an effective way to train state and county offices first surfaced with the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994. With the passage of this law, the FSA informal appeals process became more complicated, with an even stronger emphasis placed on ensuring proper and adequate due process.

It was critical to reach all of our employees and committee members because of the major roles they play in carrying out due process requirements. However, because of limited funding, it wasn't feasible to bring everyone together for a training meeting on this subject alone. Even more importantly, we knew that employees should have access to the material at their convenience and as often as they needed. We decided that a video would serve everyone's needs.

Even though no one had experience with video producing, we decided to forge ahead because of the subject's importance. The result was even better than expected. Our hour-long video covers the key procedures in handbook 1-APP (Program Appeals, Mediation, and Litigation) and illustrates some significant points through a simulated meeting with an appellant. Role players demonstrated how the entire appeals process is designed to work. We also provided sample outlines and determination letters to the viewers to help stimulate discussion,



Kansas State Office appeals training video cast and production crew. Left to right: Karen Dekat, Sharon Thoman, Dean Altenhofen, Terry Hawk, Jack Salava, State Committee Chairperson Tim Peterson, SED Adrian Polansky, and Patricia Smith. Not pictured: Roger Lemmons.

and we encouraged county employees to send us any questions they had.

Response to the video has been favorable. Just two weeks after its "premiere" at a District Director Conference, we have seen more thorough and clearly written county committee decision letters issued to appellants. Atchison County CED Rick Abel said, "We especially enjoyed the role playing using state office personnel. It showed a walk-through process from start to finish and gave a good picture of how an appeal comes about and is handled." Keith Tilley of Marshall County said, "It's nice to have the video to refer to later and as a quick brush up to prepare for an appeal or hearing. It was good also to be able to provide the training to ALL employees and committee members. It wouldn't have been possible otherwise."

Terry Hawk, Kansas State Office Farm Programs Appeals Division Director, said, "We did have some concerns that the video wouldn't be as effective as live, face-to-face training. But now we know that the video was well worth the effort. The cost was much less than traditional training, and feedback has been very positive."

Nothing beats hands-on experience, and we've learned a lot about producing videos — such as shutting windows to improve sound quality and checking lighting to minimize reflection on eyeglasses. In our next effort, we will try to incorporate visual aids and make a teleprompter from one of our computers.

Our lesson: Try something new. It may work better than the "old" way.

Starting from the Ground Up

by Tonya Washington, Agriculture Credit Officer, Lincoln County FSA Office, Ark.

An astute businessperson sees a need and fills it. With help from the Lincoln County, Ark. FSA Office, youth Chris Simpson is doing just that with a prosperous and growing lawn care business. Simpson received an FSA youth loan in 1998 to buy lawn equipment and now counts a doctor's office and a next door neighbor among his clientele.

I was glad to help Simpson develop the small business skills needed to make and keep business obligations and the economic skills that will benefit him throughout life. Simpson's youth loan has helped him understand

the importance and privilege of credit and how to take care of that privilege.

Simpson has learned his lessons well. By establishing himself as a hardworking, dependable businessman, he was able to repay his 3-year FSA loan within a year. It did not take him long to figure out that the sooner he repaid the loan, the more money he could have in his own bank account. With diligence and a little encouragement from his parents, Simpson's youth project continues to be rewarding as well as profitable. He has most definitely learned that one can have an idea and make it work.



Simpson and Washington with the lawnmower Simpson bought to begin his business.



CHICKEN FACT:

There are more than 7 billion chickens in the world, producing about 65 billion eggs annually. There are a bit fewer than 6 billion people.

Source: Agri Marketing

GOOD

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whatever he could to help. He ended up working one night until 11 p.m. on CLDAP, and then drove down to Visalia with Chris Keeler to put in another 7 hours (starting at midnight!). Lauppe says his 12-day "vacation" was not exactly that, but he was glad to help out the dedicated folks in District 3. He's thankful to be back in Modoc County and to go home now at 5:30 p.m.

Drought was the culprit in several southern states, including Texas. Michael Kaufman, Public Affairs Specialist, Ohio State Office, reports that as the magnitude of applications overwhelmed several offices, drought-ravaged Texas sent out the word for assistance. In one instance, despite existing workload in their home counties, three employees from Ohio made their way to Lamar County in April to lend a hand. They were Jonelle Lamb, Delaware County; Barb Stoll, Stark County; and David Fox, Meigs County.

During their first week there, the office staff processed applications and mailed thousands of checks to anxious farmers. Some recipients said they would not have been able to pay for spring expenses if the aid provided by FSA hadn't come through when it did. Several other Texas counties received much needed and appreciated help from other states, including Kansas and Idaho, to process applications and calculate payments.

Michael Kaufman says it best. "Farmers and FSA employees are bound in an agricultural partnership as sacred and as enduring as the land itself. Service is not just part of our Agency's name, but a solemn pledge to agricultural producers everywhere. To all of you out there, a sincere and well deserved thank you!"

An FSA Graduation in Puerto Rico

by FSA Outreach Programs Staff

This spring, as thousands of high school and college students graduated, culminating years of hard work, FSA in Puerto Rico held a special graduation ceremony of its own. Eighty-five limited-resource farmers successfully completed the 60-90 day training phase of FSA's Small Farmer Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Program.

This intensive training program assists small, underserved borrowers and beginning farmers who lack profitability on their farms improve their incomes through financial analysis and better farm management. FSA Puerto Rico staff members, in partnership with the University of Puerto Rico's (UPR) Agricultural Extension Service, help the participants learn to operate an independent farming enterprise, including keeping records and paying taxes, debts, and laborer salaries. They also provide one-on-one technical assistance and ensure that the farmers have access to FSA services. The program was implemented in Puerto Rico in 1997 and is sponsored



Left to right: Rafael Olmeda, Pedro Rodriguez, and Jorge Comas present a graduation certificate to Elsa Colon, an ornamental plant producer. Not pictured: Extension Agent Landis Forestier.

by the UPR (an 1862 Land Grant Institution).

Jorge Comas, Hispanic American Outreach Coordinator from the Outreach Programs Staff in Washington, D.C., attended the graduation ceremony held at the Agri Center in Cayey, Puerto Rico. He and Pedro Rodriguez, Associate Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences of the UPR, and Rafael Olmeda, Project Director, presented certificates to the farmers at the ceremony. The certificates were

signed by Under Secretary Schumacher and Heriberto Martinez, Puerto Rico's SED.

As is often the case, education won't stop here for FSA's graduates. They will continue to receive regularly scheduled farm visits and technical assistance as needed. Meanwhile, Puerto Rico FSA staff and the UPR are planning a graduation for another 15 farmers and have already begun working with a new crop of students.

Paragon of Health Retires

by Trish Smith, State Outreach Coordinator, Kansas State FSA Office

Bert Lading never took a full day of sick leave in 35 years! What commitment and strength from our esteemed coworker who retired in May. Bert, our Compliance and Aerial Photography Division Chief, began his career with ASCS back in 1964 as a County Office Manager Trainee in Reno County, Kan. He then served 13 years as a County Office Manager/CED in Shawnee County,



photo by Trish Smith

Kan. In 1978, Bert was hired as a Program Specialist in the Compliance and Aerial Photography Division at the state office. He became Division Chief in 1987.

The state office held a BBQ luncheon for Bert, attended by coworkers from across the state, including retirees. Bert plans to fill his days with fishing, hunting, and camping. And hopefully not a single sick day!

Exploring Antarctica

by Joyce A. Karpen, Traffic Management Division, Kansas City Commodity Office, Mo.

I'm definitely an explorer; the mundane is not for me. So, in search of something unusual, I spent 2 weeks last December in the South Pole, the last frontier. My expedition was made up of 82 people from all over the world. I was the only one from Missouri and the only one who was hearing-impaired. I got along just fine, as people wrote notes for me, and some talked slowly for me to lip-read.

After sightseeing in Buenos Aires, we flew to Ushuaia, Argentina — the most southern city in the world. Then we sailed for 2 days, braving rough seas in the Drake Passage at 14 miles per hour, to reach Antarctica. We explored the continent for 6 days in its "summer," which was about 20 degrees at its mildest with a numbing wind chill. We dressed in many layers of clothing to compensate. During the summer, it's daylight for 24 hours — no sunrise or sunset. The people who live there take full advantage of the light, since in the "winter" it's always dark.

Our ship, the Clipper Adventure, held 122 persons, including the crew. My room was near the bottom (above the

engine floor) of the ship...which was much cheaper. I felt lots of vibrations from the engine and the waves bouncing against the wall of my room. My closet doors and the drawers of my nightstand slid open and closed from the rolling waves. We also had to watch our balance when walking on the rolling ship's deck. There were paper bags everywhere in case of seasickness, but I was one of the lucky ones who didn't get really sick. But I still had my "sea legs" for two days after I got home. I could feel my bed rocking me back and forth.

We used Zodiac rafts launched from the ship to hike and explore the icy land. The scenery was spectacular — mountains, icebergs, and glaciers of all different shapes. On many landings we visited penguins. These flightless birds are excellent swimmers and like to leap out of the water, similar to dolphins. They are comical to watch as they walk with their wings outstretched for balance. On one island we saw what looked like millions of penguins busy making their nests out of pebbles and rocks. In the winter, they huddle together to keep warm, turning and rotating in turns from the center to the outside circle of the group. They have marvelous coordination and teamwork!

Our ship had a strong, ice-breaking hull and a computer to measure how thick the ice floes were. So it was safe for us to walk on certain ice packs, but it gave me the creeps to walk on ice with cracks in it. I thought it best to follow footprints ahead of me. Some of our group even decided to play soccer on the ice beside the ship; a few played in their shorts! After the game, some dived into the frigid water — not me, you may be sure!

On our last raft ride, we cruised around in blinding snow for 2 hours with ice all around us. Two killer whales sailed past, and Weddell seals watched us from their ice floes. The arctic animals and birds were fun to watch. Just as fascinating were some of the people I met. I visited with one man who knew sign language, since



Not much, what's new with you?

he had hearing-impaired friends back home in California. We had an interesting talk. His goal is to walk around the world!

I was astounded at the beauty of this awesome frigid land — mountains, icebergs, animals and seabirds, and the ocean. So many wonderful memories to relive later in life. How very fortunate I am!



Joyce Karpen with the Clipper Adventure packed in ice.

WHEAT FACTS:

- There are several hundred wheat varieties produced in the U.S. — all categorized into 6 classes depending on whether the grain is hard or soft, the color of the kernel, and the time of planting.
- The hard wheats (hard red winter, hard red spring, and hard white wheat) are used mainly for yeast breads. Durum, the hardest wheat, is used for pasta products like macaroni and spaghetti.
- The soft wheats (soft red winter and soft white wheat) are low in protein and are used for products like flat breads, cakes, pastries, and crackers.
- Some wheats have been developed to produce special flavors in products like tortillas and Oriental noodles.

Source: USDA



New Faces at Work

by Trish Smith, State Outreach Coordinator, Kansas State FSA Office

In observance of last April's Take Our Children to Work Day, 4 lucky kids got an inside look at the workings of the Kansas State FSA Office. Their parents brought them in to gain work experience, explore career options, and see exactly what goes on at an FSA office.



JaNeil Robinson, 9, helped her dad, Mike, in the Administrative Division. She organized papers and files, assisted with computer work, and faxed documents.



Kaleb Hawk, 9, worked with his dad, Terry, in the Farm Programs and Appeals Division. Kaleb looked up information on the Internet, copied computer files to diskette, and helped check payment calculations.



Briana Payne, 7, worked with her mom, Jackie Graves, in the Mail/Print Room. Briana helped prepare mail and pulled off documents from the BBS for printing.



Sara Salava, 11, helped her dad, Jack, in the Administrative Division. She checked e-mail messages, copied and faxed documents, typed letters, took messages, and helped look up travel management information.

photos by Trish Smith

Farm Animal Sounds in Other Languages

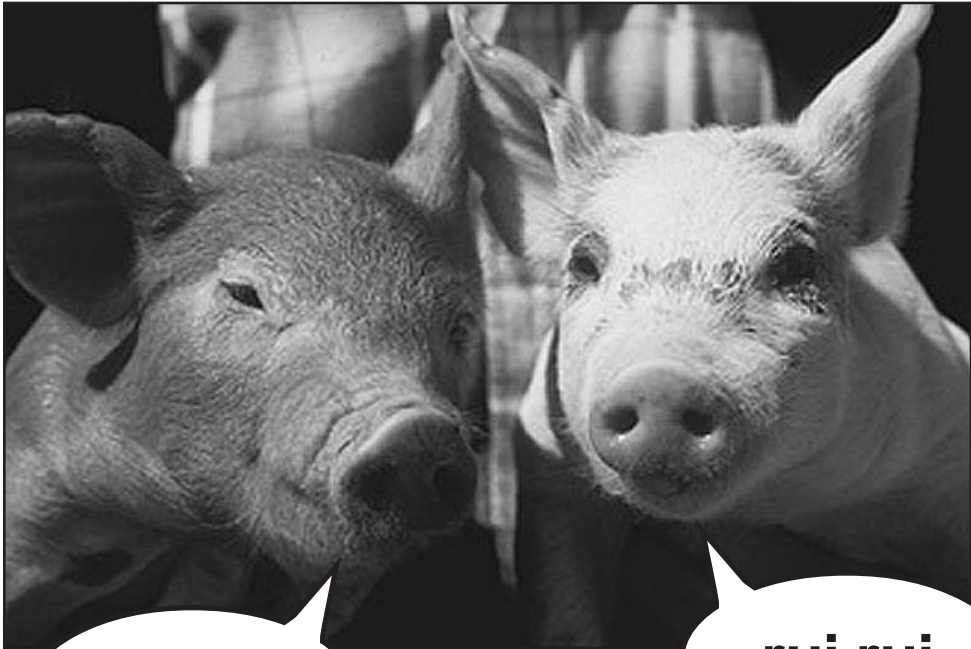
The Department of Linguistics at Georgetown University notes that different cultures often attribute different sounds to animals. In most languages, cats say “meow,” but here’s some examples where animal sounds are heard differently:

Cow
Afrikaans: moe-moe
Bengali: hamba
Dutch: boeh
French: meuh

Pig
Estonian: rui rui
Japanese: buubuu
Thai: ood ood
Chinese: hu-lu hu-lu

Dog
Catalan: bup bup
German: wau wau
Icelandic: voff
Korean: mung-mung

Sheep
Hebrew: meeee meeee
Italian: beeee
Ukrainian: be-be
Chinese: mieh mieh



Answers to June’s Puzzle

	C	H	I	P		V		O	N	I	O	N	
M	O	O				B	A	N	K		N	E	
	M	P		S			A			T		W	
U	P	S		T	A	X	P	A	Y	E	R	S	
	U		M	A			A			R			
	T			B		O		W	H	E	A	T	
H	E	N			L	I	F	E		S		O	
	R			R	E	D		D		S	T	E	M

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
Month of July		National Pork Month
July 4		Independence Day
July 7-8	Duluth, Minn.	Carolyn Cooksie, Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs, to speak at the Upper Midwest Agriculture Credit Council Annual Conference
July 19-23	Oklahoma City, Okla.	Vicki Hicks, Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, to attend Warehouse Examiners Conference

Note: The above is subject to change.